

dead flowers taste sweet by krelboyne

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Summary:

He falls down, in a heap. Joins Billy on this blanket of death that doesn't belong to Spring.

Not even Hawkins' Spring.

Looks like the crumpled flowers have found a new home in Harrington's eyes. He's watching Billy, and he looks sort of. Sad. Pathetic. Or.

Maybe that's just Billy. The one with the red line that joins his nose to his mouth. The one with mashed up petals on the bottom of his boots and grass stains on his jeans.

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Author's Note:

Day 1 of Harringrove April. First Kiss.

Their spot is different now that Spring is here.

Dried leaves, frozen branches, that crunch underfoot. They're gone, now; dead, now.

There's a blanket of green, instead. A blanket of life.

Their spot. Just beyond the cluster of trees that claw at them every time they march through. That try to tell them, *stop*. That try to keep them contained. They push through, anyway, because there's a clearing.

It's privacy. It's a good place to drink, and to smoke, and to go unnoticed.

It hasn't always been *theirs*.

It had been Steve's, first.

Steve Harrington, sat on a fallen tree trunk just on the perimeter of the clearing, a cigarette propped between his lips. Unlit.

Billy had wandered there, not quite lost, but. Not exactly *not* lost. It had been an accident, of sorts. A coincidence, to wind up there - with Harrington. Of all people.

Harrington, who had lifted his head curiously, aware of crunching footsteps. Aware of an intruder.

His eyes latched onto Billy, and his shoulders slumped. Lost all tension.

And all he'd had to say was:

'Oh. Good. D'you have a light?'

That's how it started. Their spot.

Billy provided the light, and Steve provided the cigarette. They shared. And then they came back. And back again. And again.

And.

It didn't matter that they ignored each other at school. Because they had this. The clearing. Their spot.

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It's different now.

Green and dewy, instead of brown and dying.

Grass so thick and plush that, funnily enough, it's actually more comfortable than Billy's couch back in his prison on Old Cherry.

Which is a good thing, really. Since he's been tossed out - door locked behind him.

Neil didn't even have the decency to slingshot Billy's car keys in his general direction. So.

Billy has walked here.

Walked and walked, and hasn't stopped stomping his boots, even after getting here.

He didn't mean for it to happen, but it has happened, and the flowers beneath him are all trampled to fuck. Quashed, before they could ever really start to bloom. Killed dead under grinding boots.

Kicked at and kicked at, until their stems snapped and their petals spurted across the grass like blood.

It's not their fault, but.

There was too much *colour*.

Billy's world is black and white and red, and there's no room for so much goddamn colour.

Whatever. It doesn't even matter, anyway. Because the patch of grass beneath him is a mess now. Just like Billy is.

Petals everywhere. Crushed flowers.

He. Sort of wants to drop down to the floor, too.

Play dead with the flowers.

He does.

Closes his eyes, and it seems so *cruel* that the sun could be shining so brightly. Heating him up around the edges, even though his bones are cold.

Drip, drip, drip. Slow and steady. He can taste metal. It works a path from one nostril and pools on Billy's upper lip.

He licks it away, and waits.

-

'Hargrove?'

He opens his eyes and is shaded by Steve's silhouette.

Harrington blocks the sun and wears its rays like a halo.

'What's up, Harrington?'

'Brought drinks. In case you were here.'

Billy's on his back; dead flowers scattered around him, an explosion of colour.

Nothing as vibrant, though, as the stain that has dripped, and dried, from his nose.

Scarlet.

Crusted and gross, when Billy runs a finger over it, because Steve is asking:

‘Who did that?’

‘Doesn’t matter.’

‘Got into a fight again, huh?’

Billy scoffs, and he doesn’t want to move when Steve hangs a can of beer over his head like, *want it or no?*

Steve gets the picture.

He falls down, in a heap. Joins Billy on this blanket of death that doesn’t belong to Spring.

Not even Hawkins’ Spring.

Looks like the crumpled flowers have found a new home in Harrington’s eyes. He’s watching Billy, and he looks sort of. Sad. Pathetic. Or.

Maybe that’s just Billy. The one with the red line that joins his nose to his mouth. The one with mashed up petals on the bottom of his boots and grass stains on his jeans.

‘Here.’ There’s a fizz, and Harrington’s popped the can open. Is trying, for a second time, to hand it over to Billy.

He takes it. Raises it up, like he’s making a toast. Downs it, like it’s a magical elixir that might take him home. *Home* home.

The equivalent of tapping heels together, one, two, three times. *There’s no place like home, there’s no place like -*

But this is Billy’s black and white and red life, and he’s still in Hawkins when the beer goes down. Still sitting in this little patch of death.

‘You do this?’ Steve asks, and he looks around. All around them. At the mess.

‘Yeah.’

It's their spot. Was *Steve's* spot. And. Billy's fucked it up. Just a little. Just here - this little patch. But it feels like enough. Like he's brought the rot with him.

This is why he can't have anything nice.

'Shame.' Steve's saying, sipping down beer like he hasn't a care in the world. 'Bet it was real pretty, too.'

Billy's propped up on his elbows, not quite fully committed to sitting up yet. Not committed to rising from the ground. Living it up, while the flowers stay crushed. Dead. 'Yeah. It was.'

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This is their spot.

A little slice of life - even in the Winter - within the depths of a grey town.

A smoking spot. A drinking spot. A bitching-about-teachers and a *can you believe that skirt Stacy was wearing today?* spot.

It's their spot, and Billy has brought destruction here.

Has allowed the decay to crawl over the perimeter, and it shouldn't look so *green* still.

The sun shouldn't be shining, like it's playing host just for them, and the birds shouldn't be singing, like they're performing just for them.

And. Steve shouldn't be crowding over Billy, looking down at him. Hands grabbing tufts of grass where they rest at either side of Billy's shoulders.

He shouldn't be asking, 'Are you alright?'

It's not how they do things.

And. Billy should be saying *sure*, or nodding his head, or something.

Shouldn't be shrugging, as though he wants to give it all away. As

though he wants to sing louder than the birds and tell Steve just how fucking done he is.

As though he wants to tell him that this spot - *their spot* - is a little piece of heaven and he's *sorry* for bringing the hell.

But. Billy gives nothing away. He says nothing. But.

Maybe silence is louder, anyway.

'Guess it's still pretty.' Is all Steve says. And, Billy can't quite breathe because he isn't looking at the crushed flowers. He's still looking at Billy.

He *knows* Steve's talking about the flowers, but he's not *looking* at them, and he can't quite breathe.

'It's kinda like,' Steve's still speaking, and Billy can smell the beer on his breath. 'Confetti.'

Billy says nothing.

Steve tilts his head, eyes looking less brown and more like fire. 'Don't you think?'

Billy gives him nothing, because there needs to be a celebration for confetti. There's nothing to celebrate.

Steve's undeterred or something, because he's *smiling*. Billy's still stained red and Steve's smiling.

He says, 'A-ha!', and his eyes are busy with something else. Busy looking away from Billy. 'This one's still alive. Looks like you didn't get 'em all, Hargrove.'

Billy tips his head to the side and grass brushes his nose. Tickles his face. He looks to where Steve's fingers are carefully combing tiny petals.

The smallest fucking daisy, and Steve has managed to spot it.

He's right. It's alive. Every petal intact, stem unbroken. Still rooted in

the ground and standing proud. A thin thread of life on their trampled mattress.

And.

Steve just. Fucking plucks it right up. Picks it from the ground and kills it kindly.

‘You do realise it’s dead now, right?’

‘Doesn’t look dead, though. It’s still pretty.’ As though that makes any sense.

Billy huffs. ‘Sure. But technically, it’s dead.’

‘Worth it.’ Steve says, and he’s looming back over Billy, and he’s -

He’s tucking the flower into Billy’s *hair*, just behind his ear, and he’s *laughing*, like it’s some amazing joke, like Billy’s not on fucking fire for it.

Billy scrambles. ‘Fuck *off*.’ But now he’s laughing too, and he snatches the daisy from behind his ear in a heartbeat, nearly crushing it in his haste. It’s still in one piece by the time it’s freed from curls, so he gives it a new home. Tucks it, as subtly as possible, into his jacket pocket.

A little slice of life.

Even if - technically - it’s dead.

Steve is shooting, ‘*You fuck off*’, like they’re kids who still feel the thrill of spitting dirty words, and his hand is in Billy’s hair instead of the daisy. He cards fingers through delicately-styled curls, much like Billy’s boots through the flowers. Leaves one hell of a mess behind.

‘I swear t-’

Billy’s words are cut off; stomped all over by damp lips that taste like beer and flowers and *life*.

Crusted blood still sits above his mouth but Harrington doesn’t give it

a second thought.

This is their spot.

For smoking. And drinking.

And *kissing*?

Kissing, on the patch of dead flowers.

On *confetti*.

Billy can't taste metal now. It's all *Steve, Steve, Steve*, and petals and sunshine.

Tastes sweet.